

Nietzschean Anarchy
and the
Post-Mortem
Condition



Max Cafard

References to Nietzsche's works will be indicated in brackets by the abbreviated title and page number. See the bibliography of Nietzsche's works (in back) for titles and abbreviations.

“In a friend one should have one’s best enemy,” says Zarathustra,^{z 168} and Nietzsche certainly proves himself to be the best friend and the best enemy of anarchism.

Even a cursory survey of Nietzsche’s works reveals that the term “anarchist” is for him invariably a term of abuse. He does not hide his boundless contempt for this “sickly” and “decadent” “slanderer” who is an “underminer” and a “destroyer.” For Nietzsche, anarchism is one of the most baneful expressions of that psychic malaise he calls *ressentiment*. It is a symptom of modern society’s grave and perhaps terminal illness — destructive nihilism. What better friend could anarchists possibly wish for than this brilliant and uncompromising enemy?

Yet there is beyond, and indeed beneath, Nietzsche’s anarchophobia a Nietzschean Anarchy that is infinitely more anarchistic than the anarchism he assails.

It is nothing like the Nietzschean Anarchy that some recent observers have discovered. We will call these observers “Post-Mortemists” and their view from the crypt “Post-Mortemism.” We will call these Post-Mortemists the “Waking Dead,” because of their peculiar celebration of death. They find themselves to be “in the wake” of death. They consider their morbid celebration to be “a wake” for the dead. I say none of this in accusation: I only recount what they repeat endlessly about themselves. *Ces revenants*.

Endlessly. For the spirit of Post-Mortemism is pervaded by a certain kind of repetition compulsion, a fixation on certain images, certain figures of speech, even certain catch phrases (though in fact they catch little). For Nietzsche, “the scholar is the herd animal in the realm of knowledge,” one who speaks and thinks as he does “because others have done so before him.”^{WP 226} The Post-Mortemists, these sheep in wolves’ clothing, are just such herd animals, despite their ferocious exterior, despite their howling, wild enough to wake the dead.

Nietzschean Anarchy is not the Anarchy of Post-Mortem wakes, but rather the Anarchy of the Awakened Mind (a pre-Ancientist idea). The Post-Mortemist wake is the Party of Death. The Nietzschean Anarchist Party is the Party of Life.

We will call the Post-Mortemists the “Anarcho-Cynicalists.” Cynicism is the disease of preference of our age, and Nietzsche has the distinction of being one of the first to diagnose its onset. Post-Mortemism is one of the most exotic growths to blossom in the decaying social body. It attacks the reigning cynicism on behalf of a more radical cynicism. The uncharitable Nietzsche would reserve a special contempt for those Post-Mortemists “who lost their high hope” and then “slandered all high hopes”^{PN 156} using a borrowed tongue — often, ironically, a tongue borrowed from Nietzsche himself.

For many, Nietzsche is a Post-Mortemist anarchist who inspires the somber celebration of the Death of God. But for us — Pre-Ancientists and Surre(gion)

alists — Nietzsche is a Pre-Ancientist anarchist who celebrates the eternal Rebirth of the Gods.

“For us,” I say. But what right do we have to claim “Nietzsche” as our own? None at all, and we will not raise a hand if you attempt to carry off this rotten corpse to put it in some museum or reliquary.

Yet we will claim him anyway, justifying this outrage by our full recognition of the multiplicity of Nietzsches. Of course, it is a commonplace that there are as many Nietzsches as there are readers of Nietzsche. But beyond this, there are many Nietzsches within Nietzsche, and within the many Nietzsches. As the philosopher himself comments, there is a chaos within the creative self. And as the philosophical joker Chuang Tzu told in his Pre-Ancient story, brutal interference, however well intended, causes the Body of Chaos (Hun-Tun) to die. We recognize then that we must refrain from violence against the chaotic body — the Body of Nature, the Social Body, the Spiritual Body. We recognize that we can have no knowledge of “self,” except as we explore the regions of self, regions that have no clear boundaries of selfhood, which extend deeply beneath the surface of selfhood, and outward beyond the borders of selfhood.

So our present surre(gion)al journey will explore, not “Nietzsche,” but rather, certain Nietzschean regions. Regions that we might call, collectively, Anarchica. You are invited along on this voyage: “Travel to Anarchica and stalk the Cold Monster!”

In our exploration we will be guided by the strict science of Psychogeography. The earliest Psychogeographers discovered that not only does one never step into the same river twice, but that one never arrives at a single source. Whether this be the Source of the Nile, or the Source of Nihilism.

For this reason nothing would be more more pointless than to seek some true Nietzsche who “is” or “is not” an anarchist. A Prof. Basinski (under the influence of Martin “Dr. Death” Heidegger),* assures us that Nietzsche never believed in the Will to Power, Eternal Recurrence, and the *Übermensch*. These were, we are told, no more than metaphysical illusions he created to hide his own nihilism.**

Of course Nietzsche didn’t believe in any of it! And the good Prof. Basinski cannot possibly believe any of these silly rumors he’s spreading about Nietzsche.

So we forsake the quest for the Promised Land of Nietzsche. There is no compass that could direct us to such a destination. Here as everywhere, Nagarjuna’s radical Awakened-Mind dialectic must be our guide. As we cross the non-existent borders of the Nietzschean regions, we find that we might explore the Nietzsche who is an anarchist, the Nietzsche who is not an anarchist, the Nietzsche who both is and is not an anarchist, and the Nietzsche who neither is nor is not an anarchist. Or more accurately, we might explore the ways in which the many Nietzsches are and are not all of these.

*God(is-dead)Father of Post-Mortemism.

***Journal of Value Inquiry* 42:271.

WORKS OF NIETZSCHE CITED

^A Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Penguin, 1976).

^{BGE} Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968).

^{CW} Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968).

^{GM} Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968).

^{GS} Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

^{TI} Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Penguin, 1976).

^{TL} Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Penguin, 1976).

^{WP} Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage, 1968).

^Z Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Penguin, 1976).

a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes.'"¹³⁹ Lao Tzu goes one step further, asserting that "he who possesses virtue in abundance may be compared to an infant."* Zarathustra surpasses even this, urging us to "to be the child who is newly born," and noting that to do this, "the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth-giver."¹⁹⁹ An image that Lao Tzu also evokes when he asks, "can you play the role of the female in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven?"** This is the secret of Nietzschean Anarchy--the opening of oneself to these forces of spontaneity, creativity, generosity, affirmation.

Nietzschean Anarchy is PAN's Dionysian dance. It is child's play. It is beginner's mind.

In what follows, we will hear from some of these Nietzsches.*

THE ANTICHRIST VERSUS THE ANARCHIST

Bakunin said, "the urge to destroy is a creative urge also." But as Nietzsche pointed out, sometimes the urge to destroy is — let's face it — an Urge to Destroy.

Of course, Nietzsche is well aware of the truth in Bakunin's insight. In fact he expressed the same idea much more eloquently than did Bakunin: "The desire for *destruction*, change and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future..."^[GS 329] So, yes, it can be creative.

"But," he adds, "it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged, who destroy, *must* destroy, because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes them. To understand this feeling, consider our anarchists closely."^{GS 329} This is almost touching: "our anarchists." How many philosophers have been willing to claim as their own these oft-scorned stepchildren of politics? Nietzsche does, and even seeks to understand their feelings! What he discovers is that "our anarchists," poor souls that they are, are in the grips of a nihilistic rage against reality.

When he speaks of "our anarchists," Nietzsche has in mind a certain kind of anarchist. His model is not the anarchist who is a fanatic for freedom, but rather the one who is obsessed with injustice. For him, this anarchist is just the extreme type of a certain kind of revolutionary, one who expresses vicerally the revolt of the masses, of the downtrodden, of the "underprivileged." The anarchist is thus the purest and most spiritually contaminated expression of a certain kind of reactivity, the perfect embodiment of *reactive revolt*. Nietzsche's stinging charge against such an anarchism is that it is, at its deepest level, *reactionary*. Reaction is not the exclusive preserve of the right, in Nietzsche's perceptive analysis.

Though Nietzsche doesn't hesitate to cast aspersions on the "underprivileged" and their self-ordained champions, his critique is no simplistic defense of "privilege." He can as well as anyone attack and demolish the smug pretensions of the privileged. After all, it is those very "privileged" who overturned the old order of privilege to create the mass society and

*The many Nietzsches are often brilliant, witty, satirical, ironic, incisive, analytical, subtle, intelligent, and profound, but not infrequently also superficial, pretentious, heavy-handed, pathetic, spiteful, petty, fatuous, and buffoonish. It would be tempting to turn our surre(gion)al travelogue into "A Tale of Two Nietzsches." However, we will limit our visit for the most part to "The Best of Nietzsches." There is, however, "The Worst of Nietzsches," and this worst can be indeed abysmal. The abysmal Nietzsche emerges for example in a statement, quite appropriately, on the topic of "depth." A man, he says, "who has depth, in his spirit as well as in his desires...must always think about women as *Oriental*s do; he must conceive of woman as a possession, as property that can be locked, as something predestined for service and achieving her perfection in that."^{BGE 357} And savor the exquisite odor of this statement: "We would no more choose the 'first Christians' to associate with than Polish Jews — not that one even required any objection to them: they both do not smell good."^{A 625} On Nietzsche as a pretentious buffoon, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, part two, "Why I am So Clever," and part five, "Why I am Such an Asshole."

* Ibid., p. 165

** Ibid., p. 144

herd morality that Nietzsche detests so fervently. He sides neither with the established order nor with those who struggle to topple it. For Nietzsche, to paraphrase Bierce, conservatives are those who heroically defend the old absurdities, while “our anarchists” are those who strive mightily to replace them with new ones. His critique is thus a diagnosis of a sensibility rooted in reactivity, *ressentiment*, and one-sided negativity. Those of “our anarchists” who fall prey to such an insidious sensibility become obsessed with the injustices of the existing world and with their own powerlessness in the face of such evil. They are in effect, the mirror image of those slavish souls who are entranced and corrupted by the awe-inspiring spectacle of power, wealth and privilege. But in the case of our rebellious little anarchists, the spirit is poisoned by an impotent, reactive rage.

It is Nietzsche the Antichrist who savagely attacks the Anarchist, since anarchism for him is a kind of Christianity. He does not, by the way, mean by “Christianity” the spiritually and socially inflammatory teachings of Jesus, which he shows to be ironically negated by the entire history of the Church. He means, rather, the reactive institutional Christianity that retreats into pessimism and nihilism in its utter dissatisfaction with the world. Nietzsche’s indictment of Christianity and anarchism resembles Hegel’s dissection of the “Beautiful Soul.” For Hegel, the moral idealist creates a dream world with little connection to ethical reality, the embodiment of good in the actual world. But Nietzsche is much more scathing in his assault on such idealism. The “Beautiful Soul” is for him a quite “Ugly Soul,” corrupted by its narrowness and alienation from the truths of experience and the virtues of the world.

If the higher person, the *Übermensch*, is like a vast sea in which immense evil is diluted and dissolved, the moral purist is a small stagnant puddle, in which the most exalted goodness putrefies. “The Christian and the anarchist: both decadents, both incapable of having any effect other than disintegrating, poisoning, withering, bloodsucking; both the instinct of mortal hatred against everything that stands, that stands in greatness, that has duration, that promises life a future.”⁶⁴⁸ The tragic flaw in both these character-structures results from an identification of the self with an ungrounded, ahistorical ideal. The result is a rage against the real, in which the most authentic achievements evoke the most intense reactive hostility, since they threaten the necessity of the absolute break with what exists, *l’ecart absolu*, that has become a psychological necessity.

Nietzsche’s image of the anarchist is inspired by the classical anarchist revolutionary who was the reactive response to the industrializing, accumulative capitalism and the centralizing, bureaucratically expanding nation-state of the 19th century. Yet much of what he says also characterizes — perhaps even better — various strands of Western anarchism that emerged in the 1960’s and which linger on in certain subcultures. Such an anarchism defines itself practically by what it is against. It fumes and fulminates against “all forms of domination,” by which it means every one of this fallen world’s institutions and social practices, none of which has any liberatory potential.

Listen to PAN’s diagnosis of the causes of the awful ego-sickness of *ressentiment*:

For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a *guilty* agent who is susceptible to suffering — in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy: for the venting of his affects represents the greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to win relief, *anaesthesia* — the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden the pain of any kind.^{BGE 563}

PAN comes to much the same conclusion as does Gautama concerning this subject: our mental disturbances are rooted in suffering, a false view of causality, and the illusion of the separate ego. Our constructed ego cuts us off from the whole, we resist the flow of energies, we fight against the movement, we seek to step into the same river of selfhood again and again, we blame reality and time, we seek revenge through whatever convenient target presents itself.

PAN might have become an even more skilled physician of culture had he followed Gautama further in exploring the connection between ego, suffering, and compassion. He travels part of the way on this path as he reflects on eternal recurrence and *amor fati*. Just as he goes part of the way down the path of that other great old Anarchic Doctor, Lao Tzu. PAN tears away ruthlessly at some of our most deeply-rooted illusions about ourselves. “Beyond your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, and unknown sage — whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body.”^{Z 146} It is true that he here describes the body as the true self, the “great reason,” that acts through the ego and the “little reason.” But he shows also that he sometimes thinks beyond this body. Zarathustra slips and gives away PAN’s more profound view when he says that “the mighty ruler” not only “is your body,” but is also greater than the body and “dwells in your body.”^{Z 146} This is the self of the self of the ego-self, the great reason of the great reason of the little reason. For PAN, our embodiedness carries us not only beyond our little self toward a larger self, but beyond our little body toward a larger body. As Lao Tzu says, “He who loves the world as his body may be entrusted with the empire.”*

It is this wisdom of the body that is at the heart of PAN’s anarchic critique of the domineering ego and its heriocratic will. Domination has always rested on the hierarchical exaltation of the “world of man” — the human world — over the world of nature, and of the “world of man” — the masculine world — over all that is feminine or childlike. PAN is in accord with Lao Tzu’s anti-hierarchical prioritizing of the childlike and feminine aspects of the psyche. Zarathustra praises the child as “innocence and forgetting, a new beginning,

* *Ibid.*, p. 145

riddle that Zarathustra poses to us?

We find that this person with “creative will” is one who rejects another sort of will — the *heroic* will — and renounces the rebellion against nature. Such a person is, as that most anarchic of Pre-Ancientists, Chuang Tzu, calls her, the “man without desire,” who “does not disturb his inner well-being with likes and dislikes,” the “true man of old,” who “accepted what he was given with delight, and when it was gone,...gave it no thought.”* Whoever possesses a “creative will” accepts life, experience, and the flow of being, the appearance of phenomena, as a gift, and realizes that one can never have a proprietary claim on any gift.**

While Heroic will is bound to the Spirit of Gravity and takes everything seriously, the creative will expresses the Spirit of Levity, and takes everything lightly. Nietzschean Anarchy knows the anarchic power of laughter.*** “Learn to laugh at yourselves as one must laugh!” says Zarathustra^{Z 404} Elsewhere he explains that it is through laughter that we kill monsters. So as we learn to laugh we learn to kill the self. We slay the Dragon of the Ego. As I-Hsüan said, “if you seek after the Buddha, you will be taken over by the Devil of the Buddha, and if you seek after the Patriarch, you will be taken over by the Devil of the Patriarch.” So:

Kill anything that you happen on. Kill the Buddha if you happen to meet him. Kill a Patriarch or an Arhat if you happen to meet him. Kill your parents or relatives if you happen to meet them. Only then can you be free, not bound by material things, and absolutely free and at ease...I have no trick to give people. I merely cure disease and set people free.****

When one laughs at the self one becomes other than the self that is laughed at. One finally gets the joke that is the ego.

*Chuang-Tzu, *Inner Chapters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 108, 114

** As Nietzsche states it with unusual eloquence, “no one is free to be a crab.” [TI 547] His point is that we must always go “forward”—even if “downward” into decadence. A crab (in Nietzsche’s particular imaginary zoology) backs away from and rejects this gift of life, growth, change, transformation.

*** This does not mean, however, that Nietzsche was funny, for unfortunately he was not. I once attended a lecture in which a philosophy professor spoke at great length on the topic of “Nietzsche and Humor.” His thesis was that Nietzsche was a member of that rare species -- the funny philosopher! The Professor assured the audience that Nietzsche’s works were replete with humorous discussions, funny one-liners and hilarious episodes. Indeed, he revealed that when he reads Nietzsche he is often moved to smile, and even to laugh out loud! What he did not reveal was one single hilarious line from the entire collected works of Nietzsche, though this did not prevent many members of the audience from smiling broadly and even chuckling a bit. Apparently, the highly-developed sense of humor cultivated by certain professors of philosophy allows them to extract a certain quantum of hilarity from statements like “Nietzsche is funny.” Or did they get the other joke?

**** “The Recorded Conversations of Zen Master I-Hsüan” in Chan, p. 447.

This is the anarchism of permanent protest. The anarchism of militant marginality. The anarchism of sectarian theoretical purity. The anarchism of grand gestures that become increasingly petty and indeed meaningless as they are dissolved in the vast Post-Mortem Ocean of Signifiers. As sophisticated surrealism becomes the stuff of advertising and music videos, and the entire culture lapses into brutal cynicism tinged with irony, all homely gestures of resistance, all sighs on behalf of the oppressed, all “critiques of all forms of domination,” all this becomes low-level noise, lost in a din of background noise (The High Deci-Bel Epoque). Though if any of it happens to be mildly interesting, it can be recycled as bits and pieces of style.

Nietzsche once pointed out that the interesting question for Kantian ethics is not what actions are necessary according to the Categorical Imperative, but why belief in a Categorical Imperative was so goddamn necessary for Kant. Similarly, we might ask why for certain classical anarchists cataclysmic revolution was an absolute necessity, and for certain contemporary anarchists sectarian dogmatism and the politics of permanent protest are a psychological necessity. Why does their spirit (and perhaps their nervous system) crave it so intensely? I have heard certain anarchists proclaim, with evident satisfaction, that “everything our enemies say about us is true” (and many more have entertained such thoughts, whether with pride or guilt). According to their Manichean worldview, everything these enemies think to be so horrifying is in reality quite wonderful, and to be accused of it should be a source of boundless pride. Such anarchists thus recreate themselves in the reactive image of the reactive image that reactionaries have of them. Rather than negating the negation, they affirm the negation, achieving the bliss of some rather incoherent sort of pure negativity.

The particular anarchists that Nietzsche targets are only one variety of a nihilistic species that includes all kinds of “slanderers, underminers, doubters, destroyers.”^[WP 26] It is for this reason that he places “anarchism” in a seemingly bizarre list that includes such other symptoms as “celibacy,” “sterility,” “hystericism,” and “alcoholism.”^{WP 26} * Such an anarchism sees nothing but the negative in what is, yearns for revolutionary destruction, and finds hope (or perhaps merely a “principle of hope”) only in a post-revolutionary Utopia bearing little connection to anything that actually exists. Such an anarchism is a kind of Left Platonism, taking refuge not in Plato’s Realm of Eternal Forms, but in an equally ghostly and disembodied Realm of Eternal Forms of Freedom.

The critique of anarchism is merely a minor variation on Nietzsche’s major theme of the destructive nature of all varieties of *ressentiment*. “This plant,” he tells us, “blooms best today among anarchists and anti-Semites,” who seek “to sanctify *revenge* under the name of *justice* — as if justice were at bottom merely a further development of the feeling of being aggrieved — and to rehabilitate

*Bizarre, though to be honest, has there ever been a careful study of anarchist groups to see what proportion of their members are hysterical celibates or sterile alcoholics? Perhaps there is grant money somewhere.

not only revenge but all the *reactive* affects in general.^{BGE 509-510} The wisest old anarchist I ever met once said to me (summing up his philosophy of life): “We deserve the best!” His entire life has been a celebration of as much of this best as we (all of us — no one is excluded from his Anarchist Party) have experienced and created. Yet for every anarchist with such a spirit, I have found many whose whole being proclaims the question, “Why have they done this to me?” Such an anarchist is a walking complaint.

In the 19th century this *ressentiment* of revolt was embodied above all in Nechaev’s fanatical and murderous nihilism. But it also found expression in the side of Bakunin’s character that drew him so powerfully to Nechaev, the lumpenproletariat, and the brigands, and led him to fantasize vast revolutionary potential in every poorly-organized insurrection. In recent anarchist sectarianism *ressentiment* reemerges (“with a vengeance,” needless to say) in Bookchin’s anarcho-negativism, in which political theory and practice deteriorates into the politics of spleen. Social ecology becomes anti-social egology. The cult of negativity finds its *déraison d’être* in *ressentiment* — not only against “all forms of domination” but against every existing reality. Every practical attempt to transform the conditions of life is condemned as irrelevant, simpleminded, or else some sort of devious reactionary plot. And the more insidious it is, the more seriously it threatens to accomplish some good deemed unattainable according to the dictates of abstract dogmatism.

Post-Mortemists have depicted Nietzsche as the enemy of dialectical thinking. They presume that merely because he demolishes the sophistries and self-delusions of dialecticians that he is somehow anti-dialectical. Yet no one has ever but more teeth into a biting dialectical logic. “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”^{BGE 279} How many anarchists in their struggle against the state have reproduced a little state within themselves? How many leftists in their crusades against domination have turned themselves into domineering, power-hungry dogmatists? The monster signifies violence, fanaticism in ideas, rigidity of character, contempt for persons — all of which have been reproduced in abundance, even in more extreme forms, in the monster-slayers themselves. The warriors of being fall into the abyss of nihilism. “We are nothing but we shall be all.” But out of nothing comes nothing!

Such an affirmation of nothingness (a Bad Infinity, to be distinguished from the Nothingness of Affirmation of Gautama, B-hme, etc.) arises from the propensity to define oneself in relation to that which one is not; in this case the system of power and domination. By defining oneself as powerless, or merely subject to power, one overlooks the marvellous powers that are slumbering within one’s own creative spirit. Just as “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” powerlessness corrupts and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely. In the case of the oppressed, or, rather those who allow themselves to be defined by the conditions of their oppression, their souls are poisoned by their reactive will to power. Their oppositional perspective

in all its diversity and particularity is the core of PAN’s enigmatic doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence. It signifies the infinite depth and richness of the present moment valued for its own being, not for any end beyond itself.*

Accordingly, PAN excludes only one philosopher from his general condemnation of the history of Western philosophy.

With the highest respect, I except the name of *Heraclitus*. When the rest of the philosophic folk rejected the testimony of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he rejected their testimony because they showed things as if they had permanence and unity. Heraclitus too did the senses an injustice. They lie neither in the way the Eleatics believed, nor as he believed — they do not lie at all...But Heraclitus will remain eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty fiction. The ‘apparent’ world is the only one: the ‘true’ world is merely added by a lie.^{TI 480-481}

PAN gives his fellow Pre-Ancientist Heraclitus well-deserved recognition, but does the latter an injustice in regard to his view of the senses. For Heraclitus the senses do and do not lie. And if they lie it is only to reveal truth through their lies. Heraclitus did the senses complete justice when he said “he prefers things that can be seen, heard and perceived.”

Pre-Ancientism is a critique of the illusions of centrism. And Nietzsche is one of the great critics of all centrisms, including anthropocentrism. “If we could communicate with the mosquito, then we would learn that it floats through the air with the same self-importance, feeling within itself the flying center of the world.”^{TL 42} This is the message of Lao Tzu also: the universe does not revolve around us (unless we adopt a metaphysics worthy of a mosquito). “Heaven and Earth are not humane. They regard all things as straw dogs. The sage is not humane. He regards all people as straw dogs.”** PAN directs us back to pre-Ancient times, before the blockheads carved nature up, geometricized the world and prepared it for domination. The crucial step was the replacement of the multitude of spiritual centers with a centering of power in the ego.

Yet Nietzsche has been seen as a kind of philosophical egoist. One of the great Nietzschean ironies is that this critic of the heroic has so often been reduced to a rather adolescent sort of hero-worshiper. His reflections on the will point in a quite different direction. According to Zarathustra, “all ‘it was’ is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident--until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I willed it.’ Until the creative will says to it, ‘But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.’”^{Z 253} One might ask who this self is that can be said to have willed all things, wills all things, and shall will all things. The small self with its small will seems to become a great self with a vast will. What is the meaning of this

*Though some humorists say that it means that everything occurs over and over and over and . . . We will call this the Twilight Zone interpretation.

** Tao te Ching [The Lao Tzu] in Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Un. Press, 1963), p. 141.

in time. Our floating forgotten umbrella affair now has a point of origination or initiation. And finally, in restoring the “period” he “puts a point” to the whole affair, as if the forgetting were previously held in suspension, but the umbrella is now, once and for all, and quite decisively, “forgotten.”

Perhaps Derrida is right and this passage is undecidable, that is, in so far as it is a forgotten text, and therefore perhaps not about a forgotten umbrella. But how can it be nothing more than a forgotten text? Only in so far as we make a Derridean decision, a decision not to decide.

Jacques, you need to decide!

So we decide that it is une parapluie. We decide that it is *un parasol*. We decide that it is a shield against the domineering light of the Sun, that image of hierarchical power and domination. We decide that it is *une ombrelle*. We decide that it is *un nombril*. We decide that it is *le nombril du monde*. We decide that it is the axis of imagination around which turns the wheel of fate. We decide that it is the vast Nietzschean umbrella, which points to the heavens, to the heights, to the lightness of Dionysius, and which opens up to infinity.

We decide, on the other hand, that it is a sad little text signifying that poor Nietzsche forgot his umbrella.

NIETZSCHE AS PROPHET OF PRE-ANCIENTISM

As we have seen, Nietzsche is not much of a Post-Mortemist (though he may be the Post-Mortemist’s best friend!). And we have begun to discover that he is, at least in his best moments, a Pre-Ancientist. Let us call this Nietzsche “Pre-Ancientist Nietzsche” or PAN. The allusion to the pagan god is appropriately Nietzschean. For Pan, “this dangerous presence dwelling just beyond the protected zone of the village boundary” is the Arcadian counterpart to the Thracian god Dionysius, Nietzsche’s favorite deity.* And as Bulfinch points out concerning Pan, “the name of the god signifies *all*,” and Pan “came to be considered a symbol of the universe and personification of Nature,” and later to be regarded as “a representative of all the gods and of heathenism itself.”** PAN is the Nietzsche of pagan celebration, the Nietzsche of love of the Earth, the Nietzsche of life-affirmation, the Nietzsche of generosity and gift-giving.

PAN celebrates and endows with eternity that which appears. He “saves the phenomena” or “saves appearances” (“sauve les dehors”) so to speak.

A certain emperor always bore in mind the transitoriness of all things so as not to take them too seriously and to live at peace among them. To me, on the contrary, everything seems far too valuable to be so fleeting: I seek an eternity for everything: ought one to pour the most precious salves and wines into the sea?^{WP 547-548} His vision reminds us of another great Pre-Ancientist and anarchist, William Blake, who famously “held infinity in the palm of his hand” and saw “Eternity in an hour.” Exactly such an affirmation of being becoming

* Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 81.

** Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch’s Mythology* (New York: Modern Library, N.D.), p. 136.

comes to absorb their entire being. They are occasionally dangerous but always tiresome lions. The spirit of the child has been entirely extinguished in them. Their creativity, spontaneity, playfulness, and vitality are destroyed.

Nietzsche’s message concerning such anarchist sectarians is the same as his message about all dogmatists, all who wield their truth like a weapon. “Avoid all such unconditional people! They are a poor sick sort, a sort of mob: they look sourly at this life, they have the evil eye for this earth. Avoid all such unconditional people! They have heavy feet and sultry hearts: they do not know how to dance. How should the earth be light for them?”^{Z 405-406} In effect, Nietzsche says to the “unconditional” anarchists, “If I can’t dance, I don’t want your anarchism!” Despite all their ideological purity, despite their incessant talk of “humanity” and “ecology,” such anarchists cannot love actual human beings, nor can they love the earth.

ON MONSTERS HOT AND COLD

So Nietzsche proves himself to be anarchism’s best friend and enemy. But his gift to anarchism goes far beyond his amicable hatred. For despite his scathing attacks on anarchists he shows himself to be not only a good friend and a good enemy of all anarchists but also to be a good anarchist.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of anarchism is its voluntarism — its opposition to the imposition of the will of one upon another through force and coercion. And no anarchist has stated the case against coercion more perceptively than has Nietzsche. Coercion is corruptive force, he says. But contrary to the conventional anarchic complaint, its most significant corrupting effect is on the victims, not the perpetrators. “Every power that forbids, that knows how to arouse fear in those to whom something is forbidden, creates a ‘bad conscience’ (that is, the desire for something combined with the consciousness of danger in satisfying it, with the necessity for secrecy, for underhandedness, for caution). Every prohibition worsens the character of those who do not submit to it willingly, but only because they are compelled.”^{WP 391} No wonder some anarchist rhetoricians become discouraged when their ringing condemnation of “all forms of domination” falls on deaf ears. They pay far too much attention to the injustices of the oppressors and to little to the ways in which power has transformed those who are coerced and dominated.

Nietzsche’s imperious questioning of *techne* also betrays his deeply anarchistic spirit. His critique of technical rationality and technological domination is prophetic. Despite his well-known admiration for some varieties of “will to power,” the will to dominate and manipulate nature is the object of his most scornful derision. “Our whole attitude toward nature, the way we violate her with the aid of machines and the heedless inventiveness of our technicians and engineers, is *hubris*.”^{BGE 549} He sees that our will to dominate nature inevitably produces a will to dominate human nature also. “[O]ur attitude toward *ourselves* is *hubris*, for we experiment with ourselves

in a way we would never permit ourselves to experiment with animals and, carried away by curiosity, we cheerfully vivisection our souls..."^{BGE 549} Certain impeccably anarchistic but nonetheless simplistic theories onesidedly trace the quest to dominate nature in the actual domination of "human by human," but dogmatically dismiss the roots of social domination in the urge to conquer nature. In reality the relationship between the two dominations is — as Nietzsche, that great anti-dialectical dialectician, grasped quite well — dialectical.

Nietzsche is not only one of the most devastating *critics* of the state, but also one of the most accurately perceptive *analysts* of that institution. Few before him were quite so indiscrete in divulging the origins of the state in force, violence and domination. The state, he says, "organized immorality — internally: as police, penal law, classes, commerce, family; externally: as will to power, to war, to conquest, to revenge."^{WP 382} He grasps the ironic truth that "law and order" as carried out by the state is in fundamental contradiction with the nature of its subjects. The masses on whose subservience it depends are incapable of either the banal cruelties or the paroxysms of horror that define the monster. "How does it happen that the state will do a host of things that the individual would never countenance? — Through division of responsibility, of command, and of execution. Through the interposition of the virtues of obedience, duty, patriotism, and loyalty. Through upholding pride, severity, strength, hatred, revenge—in short, all typical characteristics that contradict the herd type."^{WP 382-383} Its ability to do that which would terrify the individual is not for Nietzsche a reproach against the state, however, but merely a statement of the brutal truth that the mass of state-worshippers refuse to recognize. "None of you has the courage to kill a man, or even to whip him, or even to — but the tremendous machine of the state overpowers the individual, so he repudiates responsibility for what he does (obedience, oath, etc.) — Everything a man does in the service of the state is contrary to his nature."^{WP 383} Here he does no more than taunt the good citizen with the blatant self-deception and hypocrisy on which every state is founded.

There is perhaps no more powerful assault on the state in Western philosophical thought than Zarathustra's vilification of "The New Idol." There Nietzsche indicts the state for its artificial, coercive, technical-bureaucratic reality that contradicts and undermines what is most valuable in any culture. "State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it tells lies too, and this lie crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.'"^{Z 160} Not only is the state not "the people" it in fact devours the people and all that they have created. State versus people is one of the crucial chapters in the epochal story of the battle between mechanism and organism, between the machine and life. The Artificial Monster ("that great *Leviathan*...that *mortal god*,") consumes any organic culture:

The state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says it lies — and whatever it has it has stolen. Everything

as Derrida's English translator renders this idea, those who seek meaning in Nietzsche's aphorism "must have forgotten that it is a text that is in question, the remains of a text, indeed a forgotten text. An umbrella perhaps. That one no longer has in hand."*

Here we come face to face with the Anarchy of undecidability. We peer into an anarchic abyss. We are perhaps about to be devoured by the Monster of Post-Mortemism.

It is striking that Derrida chooses as an example of undecidability a text that alludes to the forces of nature, and, indirectly, to protection from the forces of nature. For textualism is itself a metaphysical umbrella that protects one from those very forces. Such strange Anarchy has lost touch with the atmosphere. We are dealing here with *l'oubli de l'atmosphère*.**

According to Derrida's English translator, "<<I have forgotten my umbrella.>>"*** is "[f]ragment classified no. 12,175 in the French translation of *Joyful Wisdom*, p. 457."****4

According to Derrida, "<<J'ai oublié mon parapluie>>."*5 is "[f]ragment classé avec la cote 12,175, tr. fr. du *Gai savoir*, p. 457."*6

According to the original*7 German: "ich habe meinen Regenschirm vergessen" is a note classified "Herbst 1881 12[62]" in Nietzsche's collected works.*8

On examining this "fragment," we find that Nietzsche not only "forgot his umbrella," he also forgot his punctuation. In this he is unlike Derrida and Derrida's English translator, both of whom not only remembered this punctuation, but decided to give it back to Nietzsche. Interestingly, they appear to be incompetent to give him back his forsaken umbrella (no matter how severe the weather may be), yet they are perfectly capable of giving him back these little bits of forgotten text.

Furthermore, in view of Derrida's case for undecidability, the nature of his (and his translator's) restoration of Nietzsche's text seems highly ironic. First, he helps restore Nietzsche's ego, for Nietzsche seemingly defied the laws of punctuation in order to mark his "ich," even though it begins the statement, with a humble lower case "i." However, Derrida bestows on Nietzsche a majescale "J," reversing this self-effacement. Secondly, by restoring the initial capitalization, Derrida helps anchor the case of the umbrella firmly

* Ibid., p. 131

** See Max Cafard, "Derrida's Secret Name: Or, What Transpired in the Auditorium of Gaea and Logos" in *Exquisite Corpse* 38 (1992): 2-3.

*** Derrida, p. 123. Guillemets in the original.

*4 Ibid., p. 159. Reversed italics in the original.

*5 Ibid., p. 123.

*6 Ibid., p. 159. Reversed italics in the original.

*7 N.B.: "the original," that is, as it is represented in a book, and herewith re-represented. We feel compelled to admit that the following is not actually Nietzsche's scrap of paper.

*8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, (München and Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and Walter de Gruyter, 1980), Band 9, p. 587.

anarchism, that most convenient utopia of self-justifying *ressentiment*.

LITERARY ANARCHY: FORGETTING NIETZSCHE'S UMBRELLA

"It is the habitual carriage of the umbrella that is the stamp of respectability." –Stevenson, *Philosophy of Umbrellas*.

"I forgot my umbrella" –Nietzsche

"Jacques' umbrella is alive and living in Paris."

"Sometimes [an umbrella] is just [an umbrella]." –Freud

There is an Anarchy of the Text. Yet Nietzsche would have no trouble diagnosing Post-Mortem textual Anarchy as a form of what he calls "literary decadence." For Nietzsche "the mark" of such decadence is that "life no longer resides in the whole." Though he would no doubt admire the brilliant sense of multiplicity that it sometimes achieves, he would certainly conclude that its focus on diversity comes "at the expense of the whole" so that "the whole is no longer a whole." Its Anarchy is not the Anarchy of life, of the organic, of the dynamic whole, but rather "the anarchy of atoms."^{CW 626}

Post-Mortemist Literary Anarchy is a rebellion against the absurd concept that texts are autonomous totalities, textual organisms in which subtexts are textual organs, textual cells, textual organelles. But in their haste to murder the textual organism in order to dissect it, the Post-Mortemist anarchists ignore the larger ecology of the text. Their urge to deconstruct is an ecocidal urge also.

Derrida exhibits this impulse, the urge to deconstruct totality transmuted into an impulse to murder the whole, to deconstruct that which defies construction. He directs this ecocidal impulse toward a "whole" that he calls "Nietzsche's text," quite appropriately invoking a Monster. Referring to a seemingly cryptic "fragment" found among Nietzsche's papers, Derrida proposes:

To whatever lengths one might carry a conscientious interpretation, the hypothesis that the totality of Nietzsche's text, in some monstrous way, might well be of the type, 'I have forgotten my umbrella' cannot be denied. Which is tantamount to saying that there is no 'totality to Nietzsche's text,' not even a fragmentary or aphoristic one.*

Is it possible that a crucial difference between Nietzsche and Derrida consists in the fact that the former, when he has forgotten his umbrella, knows that it is in fact an umbrella that he, chaos that he is, has forgotten. Derrida on the other hand, might think that "il s'agit d'un texte, d'un texte en rance, voire oublié, peut-être d'un parapluie. Qu'on ne tient plus dans la main."^{**} Or,

about it is false; it bites with stolen teeth, and bites easily. Even its entrails are false. Confusion of tongues of good and evil: this sign I give you as the sign of the state.^{Z 161}

All vitality is drained from the living social organism so that the Cold Creature might live. The Monster is a grotesque parasite, a strange Gargantuan vampire, and the people understand this. "Where there is still a people, it does not understand the state and hates it as the evil eye and the sin against customs and rights."^{Z 161}

Nietzsche's diagnosis of the state was still prophetic in the 1880s, since the the triumphant Monster still had a century to fulfill its deadly destiny before beginning its precipitous decline and decay. His strident indictment sounds rather dated, however, in the era of the new Monster, the corporate Global Golem. "On earth there is nothing greater than I: the ordering finger of God am I' — thus roars the monster,"^{Z 161} according to Zarathustra. Today such a roar would be met with laughter, except possibly in some Third-World dictatorship in which the secret police might be watching. For as Nietzsche himself had quite presciently begun to realize, in mass society nothing really seems so "great," and cynicism reigns supreme. The state as "the ordering finger of God?" Ha! In this sad Post-Mortem world, God has given everything the finger.

So the state may be, as Nietzsche says, the Coldest Monster. But now there are cold, hot and even luke-warm Monsters at large. The late modern state, that Post-Mortem Monster, we are coming to discover, is no more than a Lukewarm Monster. Thus it lies only lukewarmly. It could not with a straight face say, "I the State am the People." It can, however, half-heartedly tell us that it feels our pain.

The dominion of the great Monster Leviathan has been superceded not by that of the Lukewarm Monster, but by the ascendancy of another Beast, one that is neither cold nor luke-warm. It has a rather dark, satanic, and hot interior, but a radiant, divine, and above all *cool* exterior. It is Moloch, the Monster that eats its young — the Consuming Monster.

Nietzsche in fact realized that mass society would have little place for the old authoritarian state. "Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion."^{Z 130} He is slightly less prophetic on the topic of work, observing that "One still works, for work is a form of entertainment."^{Z 130} Under the reign of Moloch few would confuse the two. Today, few work for amusement, though many do so because work is for them a means toward entertainment. On the other hand, in an ironic reversal of Nietzsche's aphorism, entertainment has increasingly become a form of work. Just as producers were once taught to feel shame if their work was not up to par, consumers now feel suitably guilty if they are not entertained in the correct manner.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's true object of attack in his assault on the state is not one particular historical institution but all the forces that are destructive of life. "State I call it where all drink poison, the good and the wicked; state,

*Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, pp. 133, 135.

** Ibid., p. 130.

where all lose themselves, the good and the wicked; state, where the slow suicide of all is called 'life.'^{z 162} Nietzsche's primary target is often statist political conformity — the dissolution of individuality into good citizenship, the homogenization of cultural diversity into official state *Kultur*, the mechanization of life in a techno-bureaucratic world. But he also had strong intimations of where the corporate state was going, that the accent was to fall more on the *corporate*, the economic, and less on the state, the political.

What is the color of power today? "Behold the superfluous! They gather riches and become poorer with them. They want power and first the lever of power, much money — the impotent paupers!" says Zarathustra.^{z 162} As I read this passage late one night, I heard someone passing by outside my window, speaking these precise words (for I wrote them down immediately): "It's not about black and white anymore. It's about power and domination, and it has no color except..." At this point the voice faded out and I could not hear the final word. I rushed to the door but found no trace of the passer-by. I'll call the voice, "The Ghost of Nietzsche."

Zarathustra was already on to the message of this Ghost. The progression in his successive tirades against "The New Idol" and "The Flies In The Market Place" prefigures a real historical movement. After warning us about the dangers of the state, Nietzsche cautions us concerning the threat of the developing economic society. "Where solitude ceases the market place begins; and where the market place begins the noise of the great actors and the buzzing of the poisonous flies begins too."^{z 163} Nietzsche foresees the coming of the society of the spectacle, a world of illusion in which "even the best things amount to nothing without someone to make a show of them."^{z 163} He heralds the coming of those swarms of poisonous flies that now overrun the earth, spreading poison everywhere. They are poisonous indeed! Nietzsche sounds the tocsin for the rising flood of toxins that inundate the world. If we poison the spirit can the corruption of the body be far behind (or vice versa)? As Nietzsche predicted, the masses may have a long life of slow death to look forward to in this poisonous, Post-Mortem world. Perhaps God was lucky to die early and avoid the crowds. Or did he?

Nietzsche may have written the obituary for a certain ancient psychopath who sometimes goes under the alias "God."^{*} Yet this same Nietzsche heralds the coming of a new Post-Mortem God. "Verily he [the actor] believes only in gods who make a big noise in the world."^{z 164} The culture of noise, the society of the image, gets the God it needs and deserves. Nietzsche had a prophetic insight into the coming domination of spirit and psyche by the what has with suitable irony been called "the culture industry" (presumably because it

*Though this still redoubtable personage, apparently thinking that rumors of his demise have been greatly exaggerated, lives on in certain circles in a state of indefinitely suspended senility. Some have accused the devotees of the patriarchal authoritarian God with worshipping a "white male God." But their God really *is* a white male. How do we know? As criminologists have pointed out, that's the exact profile for a serial killer.

his pupils' values. He was terrified that the philosopher might corrupt the youth of his little polis. In a recent work, Bookchin undertakes the theoretical demolition of Nietzsche's supposedly pernicious influence. It turns out that Bookchin's Nietzsche is no more than a parody of Post-Mortem Nietzsche. At the hands of Bookchin, this genealogist of culture becomes a zany literary type who sees all of history as merely "a disjointed, variable, and free-floating collection of narratives."

Yet Nietzsche went to some lengths to show that realities like "narratives" are symptoms of realities that are far from "free-floating" — realities such as systems of power and cultural institutions that interact with fundamental biological drives and psychological impulses in shaping the self. Bookchin, in his frenzied attack on the evils of Post-Mortemism, discovers a Nietzsche that reflects his own aversion to Post-Mortem textualism more than it reveals anything particularly Nietzschean. Bookchin's Post-Mortemism is an incoherent jumble in which A: Derrida says that there's nothing outside the text, and B: Nietzsche influenced Post-Mortemism, ergo C: Nietzsche must have believed that history is nothing but textuality.

Anyone who is willing to take the plunge into the murky waters of Post-Mortemality will search vainly for a Nietzschean view of history in Derridean textualism. As Nietzsche states in the "preface" to *The Genealogy of Morals*, "our ideas, our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit — related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of one will, one health, one soil, one sun."^{GM 452**} Nietzsche would never say that "il n'y a pas de dehors du texte." He would say that there is no life that is without perspective. But every perspective is rooted deeply in life, in the body, in the earth, in the great "dehors."

We might apply Nietzsche's naturalistic-imaginistic mode of critique to Bookchin himself. Nietzsche would never dismiss Bookchin's creation of his own fictitious character "Nietzsche" as a mere "free floating narrative." Rather, he would situate the Bookchinite imaginary Nietzsche within Bookchin's own peculiar narrative will to power, his creation of an authoritative theoretical edifice on behalf of which he must do battle with, and attempt to annihilate all theoretical (and intensely emotion-charged) threats. He would also explore the foundations of this edifice in Bookchin's own seething *ressentiment*, and indeed the foundations of this *ressentiment* itself — the forces that shaped an imperious will, the underlying states of health and malaise, the qualities of the soil in which it developed, the nature of that sun that infused it with energy, or which perhaps hid its face at crucial moments. Finally, Nietzsche might reflect on why such a marvelous example of the reactive character structure should have found its place of refuge and its field for raging self-assertion in

*Murray Bookchin, *Re-enchanting Humanity: A Defense of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism and Primitivism* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 179.

** Yes, Nietzsche did indeed say that "our butts grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit" — another comment on the decadent life of the scholar, perhaps.

unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from outside.^{WP 47}

An apt diagnosis of the Post-Mortem Condition: in sum, an “artificial change of one’s nature into a ‘mirror’; interested but, as it were, merely epidermically interested...”^{WP 47}

And what of the universal will to power? Does this not lend support to Anarcho-Cynicalism? Does not Nietzsche proclaim: “Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master”?^{Z 226} Post-Mortemists often find in Nietzsche nothing but affirmation of the will and discovery of powerseeking everywhere. He is of course a “master of suspicion.” But is not suspiciousness a mark of the slave mentality that he detests? Is not an obsession with power a mark of the inferior sensibility? The highest metamorphosis of the spirit is the child, and only the most neurotic child wastes much time on suspicion. Nietzsche exalts the will *only to forget it*. “He must still discard his heroic will; he shall be elevated, not merely sublime: the ether itself should elevate him, the will-less one.”^{Z 230} The will attains its greatest power through its own disappearance.

And what about “difference”? Nietzsche, living at the height of productionist industrial society, thought that the great threat to individuality and creativity was the imposition of sameness. “No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.”^{Z 130} History’s dialectic of absurdity has moved one step beyond Nietzsche, so that the rage for sameness now takes the form of an obsession with difference. The consumptionist mind reaches new levels of brilliance in its sensitivity to difference, which has little to do with excellence, as Nietzsche might once have assumed. The code of commodity consumption creates a minute sensitivity to differences of symbolic import, connotation, image and style. Though sameness is alive and well, huge profits are to be made from the growing quest to “feel different” by means of an infinite variety of modes of consumption. Even “going voluntarily into a madhouse” becomes a form of commodity consumption that can be marketed as a distinctive (and quite profitable) mode of being different. And in academia, that zoo for Nietzsche’s “herd animals of the intellect,” stupidity finds a refuge in difference. Mediocre intellects pursue their quest for tenure and then fulfill their publication quotas through mindlessly mouthing the slogans and mimicking the jargon of Post-Mortemism. And one is subjected to the tortuous spectacle of Anglo-Saxons, or even more depressingly, Saxons, engaging in an unintentional parody of Gallic wit. The result has all the brilliance of a joke translated by a computer program.

But as much as we might wish to bury Post-Mortemist Nietzsche, his Specter remains very much alive. It has terrified more than one ill-informed anarchist. Murray Bookchin, certainly the most *authoritative* voice in contemporary anarchology, once opposed the idea of a seminar on Nietzsche at his Institute for Social Ecology on the grounds that it might undermine

produces bacteria). Nietzsche understood with Blake that “All deities reside in the human breast.” But he also foresaw the day in which the the gods of pandering and publicizing, the gods of spectacle and sensationalism would supplant the old psychic Pantheon, the divinities of creative energy and wild imaginings.

Nietzsche is quite explicit in his judgment of the market and the society of the image. “Far from the market place and far from fame happens all that is great...”^{Z 164} The free market frees the masses from such burdens as creative imagination, spontaneity, depth of the spirit, solitude, playfulness, the joy of the present moment — all that is “great” and good according to the Nietzschean valuation. Freed from these, one is free to pay for everything else.

According to Nietzsche, culture and the state are “antagonists.” “One lives off the other, one thrives at the expense of the other. All great ages of culture are ages of political decline: what is great culturally has always been unpolitical, even *anti*-political.”^{TI 509} What Nietzsche means, what he perceived so acutely under the Reich, was that culture is the enemy of the “political” in a quite specific sense — it is the enemy of empire and all that is imperial. Greatness of culture is annihilated by empire, whether this empire be political or economic.

Nietzsche is thus once again more anarchistic than the anarchists. It is true that he sounds rather authoritarian in his suggestion that “*Genuine philosophers...are commanders and legislators*” who say “*this shall it be!*”^{BGE 326} Yet what he intends is as anarchic as the dictum of the anarchist poet Shelley in his “Defense of Poetry” that poets are “the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” For Nietzsche’s philosophers also rule through their power of creativity. “Their ‘knowing’ is *creating*, their creating is a legislation...”^{BGE 326} And he does not mean the philosophers of the academy, but rather the philosopher-poets of the spirit. The question for Nietzschean Anarchy is who shall rule: either the masters of the state and of the market, with their heroic will to plunder and destroy, or the creators with their generous will to give birth, their gift-giving virtue.

We shall return to this anarchic Nietzschean question, but first another question concerning another Nietzschean Anarchy.

POST-MORTEMIST NIETZSCHE

“What is Post-Mortemism?” Above all, the “Post-Mortem” is a nihilistic form of consciousness emerging from forces of decline, separation, disintegration, negation, and, in short, Thanatos. Post-Mortemism, can thus, as the expression of an absolute spirit of negation, validly present itself as the most radical form of theoretical Anarchy. But despite attempts by Post-Mortemists to claim Nietzsche as one of their prophets, Post-Mortemism itself falls victim to Nietzsche’s anti-anarchist critique.

Nietzsche distinguishes between an “active nihilism” which is “a sign of

increased power of the spirit” and a “passive nihilism” which is “decline and recession of the power of the spirit.”^{WP 17} While Nietzsche’s most passionate anarchic dimension expresses his active nihilism, his destruction for the sake of creation, Post-Mortemist Nietzsche becomes the passionless prophet of passive nihilism.

Let us consider a favorite proof-text, much beloved by certain Nietzschean Post-Mortemists:

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms — in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.^{TL 46-47}

Post-Mortemists read Nietzsche as if this were all ever said about truth, as if he had no concern for the truth of the body and the truth of worldly experience.

According to such a view, “truths are illusions,” for Nietzsche, mere perspectives on reality. There is no “transcendental signified,” for we are bound by our chains of illusion, or perhaps, better, our chains of allusion, our chains of signification.

And indeed, Nietzsche did recognize the inescapably perspectival nature of knowledge. Nietzschean perspectivism is the insight that all perception, all knowing, all valuing come from *somewhere*. They arise out of, and are rooted in, some perspective, some position, some *place*. But unlike Nietzschean perspectivism, the Post-Mortem variety is deracinated, *à la dérive*. It is the annihilation of place, the view from nowhere.

Nietzsche’s view of truth cannot be reduced to a Post-Mortem nihilism, for it always retains a naturalistic core of pragmatic realism. Signification arises in the midst of a continuum of experience. “The feeling of strength, struggle, of resistance convinces us that there is something that is here being resisted.”^{WP 290} Nietzsche would dismiss our contemporary Post-Mortemist theoretical Anarchy as the latest form of escape to the dream world of ideas, the terrorism of pure theory, in which comic revolutionaries fantasize heroic conquests of idea by idea, yet remain out of *touch* with a reality that *resists* their control.*

Post-Mortemist Nietzsche, we are told, is an enemy of the whole. And quite appropriately (and ironically) this Nietzsche emerges precisely through the dismembering of the Nietzschean corpus. A dissected Nietzsche-part does indeed tell us that “Nihilism as a psychological state is reached...when one has posited a totality, a systemization, indeed any organization in all events, and

*Despite all their anarchic pretensions, the failure of Post-Mortemists to join in this resistance constitutes a de facto collaborationism.

underneath all events,” etc.^{WP 12} Nietzsche attacks the “positing” of a fictitious Totality that can give value to one who feels valueless “when no infinitely valuable whole works through him.”^{WP 12} Yet Nietzsche also shows that when the creative, gift-giving whole (as opposed to any fictitious Totality) does indeed work through the person, there is no need for such a “positing.”

Post-Mortemists ignore the Nietzsche who speaks of unity-in-diversity and the dynamic whole. This is the Dionysian Nietzsche:

The word ‘*Dionysian*’ means: an urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, the everyday, society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction.^{WP 539}

Nietzsche’s attack on “decadence” as “the anarchy of atoms” is aimed at those forces that produce a disintegration of the living whole. “The whole no longer lives at all: it is composite, calculated, artificial, and artifact.”^{CW 466} In other words, it is state, spectacle, and megamachine. In opposition to such a spirit, Nietzsche’s Dionysian is based on an affirmation of one’s place in the living whole:

Such a spirit who has *become free* stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole — *he does not negate any more*. Such a faith, however, is the highest of all possible faiths: I have baptized it with the name of *Dionysus*.^{TI 554}

Nietzsche is quite prophetic concerning the developing spiritual illness of Post-Mortemism. In fact, he helps us grasp the fact that the “Post-Mortem” is in fact nothing but the “Late Modern.”* Long before Post-Mortemism emerged as a seemingly revolutionary social transformation, Nietzsche saw the accelerating development of many of its salient themes. Eclecticism, diversification, style, discontinuity, artifice, speed, superficiality, coolness. An

abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever: cosmopolitanism in foods, literatures, newspapers, forms, tastes, even landscapes. The tempo of this influx *prestissimo*; the impressions erase each other; one instinctively resists taking in anything; a weakening of the power to digest results from this. A kind of adaptation to this flood of impressions takes place: men

*PM=late